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Report Issued with Recommendations for Maine's Implementation of Federal Health Reform Law

January 3, 2011

AUGUSTA – The Governor's Steering Committee on Health Reform and the Maine Advisory Council on Health Systems Development have issued their final report with recommendations on how to implement the comprehensive federal health care reform law signed by President Obama last year.

The plan, "Options and Opportunities for Implementing the Affordable Care Act (ACA) in Maine," reflects work undertaken by the Steering Committee and the Advisory Council over the last nine months since national health reform was enacted. There were 14 public meetings and a public hearing on the draft report to assure public input.

"I appreciate the hard work that these dedicated individuals put into creating this set of recommendations to the new Legislature and new Governor," said Governor Baldacci. "Maine has taken aggressive steps to improve the access to quality, affordable health care. The federal law provides new opportunities for families and businesses in Maine."

Trish Riley, chair of the Governor's Steering Committee and director of the Governor's Office of Health Policy and Finance, said, "We hope this document, which lays out the policy choices that the State will need to consider, is useful to our new leaders as they address their responsibilities to implement the law. Every Mainer stands to benefit from the federal law. As many as 500,000 Mainers could be eligible for subsidies to help pay for health insurance, and more private competition will be created."

The report notes that, in addition to significant changes to make health coverage more affordable for individuals and small businesses, the law provides opportunity to improve long-term care services, launch demonstrations in medical malpractice, health care quality, payment reform and disease prevention and to stimulate the development of worksite wellness programs. In 2014, when the ACA is fully operational, the State will have options to repeal or redirect some or all of the funding that now supports the Dirigo Health programs, since federal funds will replace most of what the agency now funds.

The Governor created the Steering Committee on Health Reform to work with the Advisory Council, a stakeholder group created by the State Legislature, to advise the State Legislature and Governor's Office on health care issues.

For more information on the Advisory Committee and for a link to the report, please visit http://www.maine.gov/healthreform.